

Put the test to rest

Business



“ Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted.” Albert Einstein expressed the reality of the world in one sentence, but why do people have a hard time applying it today? The “ No Child Left Behind Act” passed in 2001 has ruled the education system and pushed schools to the extreme by requiring certain scores on standardized tests. One test score should not change an entire system of education . Standardized testing should decrease in importance because it limits teachers in the classroom. Many teachers shape their class work around standardized tests, limiting them from teaching the material to only preparing for a test.

Teachers “ teach to the test” instead of actually teaching. The goal is to make the student pass a test, not impact the students’ lives by teaching them something profound. For example, “ Brookside Elementary School in Norwalk, Connecticut was just one of thousands of American public schools classified as failing during the 2010-2011 school year, according to standardized test scores”(Berger). To change this situation, “ What they did was drop their curriculum, drop their texts, and instead study exclusively from a standardized-test prep book. Kids weren’t getting a liberal arts education, but prepping to a very narrowly drawn standardized test in primarily language arts and math”(Berger).

In addition to the change of the teaching system, the standardized test wastes valuable time in the classroom for test preparation. Students lose hours of class time to learn just how the test works and the techniques, not the actual materials, to pass the test. To take this into approximation,” A study found that teachers lose approximately 60 to 110 hours a year just

because of testing and preparing for the test “(Gere). Schools try to avoid having their doors shut for good because of low test scores, so they take extreme measures to improve them by taking away from the materials reaching the students like taking candy from children. Finally, the test measures the teacher’s performance which leads to teachers cheating in order to make their classes’ scores higher.

This means that the students did not truly learn the information they were supposed to. Teachers obstruct students’ learning time in order to figure out ways around the test. In Atlanta, officials convicted eleven teachers of cheating on standardized tests. The teachers “ were under pressure to meet certain score goals at the risk of sanction if they failed. (Strauss)”. Along with the pressure of losing their jobs, “ If a school achieved 70% or more of its targets, all employees of the school received a bonus” (Strauss).

The bonus award bribes the teachers into making their students perform well. Because of this “ bribery,” the teachers became corrupted. If the students do not have the capability of achieving a certain score, teachers take the matter into their own hands and cheat the system. Schools should not administer standardized tests or let standardized tests administer them. Although sufficient evidence exists to prove that standardized testing wastes time in the classroom and limits the materials reaching the students, some may say that there is no other way to calculate the level improvement in a student’s academic education.

In addition, no specific formula to calculate a student’s progress exists because each individual has his or her own pace. Even though these

statements are partially true, calculating a student's progress should not rely on a single test that occurs once a year. The best way to improve a student's education is to make sure they are on track continuously. According to a study done by the American Federation of Teachers, " Fifty-four percent of teachers and 89 percent of administrators said the real focus of testing should be ' frequently tracking student performance and providing daily or weekly feedback in the classroom'"(Gewertz). In addition to administrators, students also claim that standardized testing does not help them learn.

The same study also reports that, " Nine in 10 students said that tests results aren't very helpful to them or their teachers after more than one week" (Gewertz). If standardized tests do not benefit students, there is no point in administering the test. Testing once a year does not measure the student's level of improvement. Standardized testing negatively impacts the classroom and the teachers. The limitations these tests put on students and teachers including the amount of time wasted in class and the limited material reaching the students interfere with the students' education .

Since nobody wants their children to fail, the current emphasis on standardized testing should change. Change the system and the students' lives.